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Portugal: The Cuban Connection

Portugal's ruling generals have a secret adviser who has been teaching them how to impose a Communist dictatorship on an unwilling populace.

He is none other than Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, a pre-eminent expert at subverting the will of the people.

On April 25, the Portuguese people voted overwhelmingly in favor of the moderate political parties which support democracy. A scant 12.5 per cent of the voters backed the Communist party.

But the military triumvirate received an urgent recommendation from Castro, according to intelligence reports, that they ignore the April elections, suppress the press and overpower the opposition.

The Cuban leader cited the experience of the late Salvador Allende, the martyred Marxist president of Chile, as evidence that a successful revolution cannot be consummated in the framework of a democracy.

The advice from Havana was echoed in Lisbon by party boss Alvaro Cunhal who acknowledged with uncharacteristic candor: "We Communists do not accept the game of elections."

Cunhal began plotting with Castro two months before the Portuguese coup. The secret intelligence reports reveal that Cunhal made a secret trip to Havana in February, 1974.

Two months later, the Portuguese Communists in cahoots with leftist military officers overthrew the right-wing dictatorship of Marcelle Caetano.

The triumphant military junta, according to the intelligence reports, began listening to Castro from the first. A close working relationship was developed through Cuba's General Intelligence Directorate, which maintains a large Portuguese-speaking Brazilian section. This made it possible for the Cubans to communicate easily with the Portuguese leftists.

Already, the Cubans have helped the Portuguese organize an internal security apparatus, which could evolve quietly into a secret police force. Cuban-style "defense councils" are also blossoming all over Portugal.

These are little more than armed commando units, which the Communists use to intimidate the moderate majority. The disciplined rowdies break up demonstrations and beat their opponents into silence. The Cubans become afraid to speak to one



Castro: "Secret adviser"

another for fear of retribution from the Communist goon squads.

In late July, Gen. Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, the Portuguese internal security chief and a member of the ruling troika, paid a nine-day visit to Cuba.

In heart-to-heart talks with Castro, according to intelligence sources, Carvalho was lectured on how to proceed with the "revolution." The Cuban dictator stressed that the Portuguese should avoid Allende's mistake of putting up with democracy and attempting "transactional settlements" with the opposition.

Castro described Allende contemptuously as "a fool" who thought he could achieve a revolution in Chile through the democratic processes. The press must be silenced, the opposition intimidated and the populace regimented, Castro urged. He warned it would take "mass mobilization"—meaning Communist control of every neighborhood—to carry out the revolution.

The brash, flamboyant Carvalho apparently was impressed. He is characterized by intelligence analysts as a radical Marxist, enormously ambitious, who may see himself as the Castro of Portugal.

He came out of his meetings with the Bearded One proclaiming: "I gathered profound guidelines, teachings even, which I believe will be extremely useful for the continuity of our revolution."

Back in Lisbon, Carvalho began putting stern warnings that dissidents

would be herded into the "bull ring" or lined up in front of firing squads. "Unfortunately," he despaired, "it's becoming impossible to carry out a socialist revolution by completely peaceful means."

It is not considered a coincidence that a Cuban military delegation arrived in Lisbon about the same time that Carvalho returned from Havana. The visitors included Brig. Gen. Senen Casas, the Army chief; Brig. Gen. Fernando Vecino, the Army's political czar; and Capt. Emidio Bacz, the Navy chief.

These three are considered specialists on monolithic discipline in the armed forces. Within days after their arrival, the Portuguese junta began purging conservatives from key units.

To cement the Cuban-Portuguese connection, Castro also sent one of his most trusted aides, Francisco Astray, to Lisbon as his top diplomat. Significantly, one of Astray's close friends is the personable, young Soviet ambassador to Portugal, Arnold I. Kalinin.

Intelligence reports claim that Kalinin was trained by the KGB and was assigned to Lisbon specifically to help the Communists gain power. He keeps a low profile, but behind the active Cubans is a shadowy Soviet presence. Intelligence reports suggest, indeed, that the Soviets are using the Cubans to manipulate events in Portugal.

The United States, meanwhile, is doing little more than watch the Portuguese crisis unravel. To the dismay of U.S. diplomats on the scene, Secretary of State Kissinger has refused to help the moderate Lisbon leaders in their struggle against the leftwing radicals.

Some top advisers were hoping, for example, that President Ford would visit Lisbon after his stopover in Spain last spring. Such a gesture would have been a tremendous boost for the Portuguese moderates. But Ford and Kissinger decided against it, without even bothering to ask the opinion of the State Department experts.

Apparently, the President would prefer to send the CIA to the rescue. But the Senate investigation of the CIA, he recently lamented, had prevented the agency from engaging in any "covert operations" in Portugal.

Retorted a diplomatic source, with barely controlled disgust: "Who wants covert action? What the Portuguese moderates need right now is a little overt help."